

# BILLERICAY & WICKFORD Gazette



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## WE'RE ARMED AND STAYING

Gypsies' warning as £13m eviction plans put in place

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"We are armed and ready to fight" is the message from travellers faced with eviction from Europe's biggest gypsy site.

The warning was issued as Basildon Borough Council paves the way for the £13 million eviction of almost 100 families from the Dale Farm site, in Crays Hill, next spring.

Traveller Jerry Delaney, 26, was adamant any eviction would be met with resistance.

"We are going to try and fight it," he said.

"We are going to get gas bottles and block the road and make an explosion if we have to. Everyone has thought about it."

He added: "We would prefer them not to come here at all. But if they do come someone will get badly hurt. They will need am-



**CRITICISM:**

Traveller spokesman Gratian Puxon condemned the council's plan.

"To spend £13 million per acre seems to be disproportionate because the whole issue of finding an alternative for the families could be done within a budget of £2.5 million," he said.

He added that he will be assisting traveller families in seeking injunctions to prevent eviction.

**Survey**

Mr Puxon also invited students from the University of Essex to carry out a survey of the properties on the site so travellers may claim for damage to property following a site clearance.

News of the planned eviction has also brought to the fore the

split in Basildon Council between the Labour and Conservative groups.

Councillor Lynda Gordon, leader of the Labour group, said: "We have always opposed an eviction on both financial and humanitarian grounds. We believe that to pay that sort of money for an enforcement issue is wrong."

Council leader Tony Ball, a Conservative, said the council had been working to secure an alternative site for the travellers, but had to withdraw from negotiations with the county council, the homes and communities agency and government offices in the East of England, after plans were leaked to the media.

He said: "We still hope for a peaceful resolution, but will take direct action if necessary to ensure planning regulations are uniformly applied across all sectors of the community."

**WE WILL NOT BE MOVED:** Travellers at Dale Farm will fight to stay at the site

**Vandalised lifebelts are frozen into lake**

WBS have gone on the rampage at Lake Meadows, endangering lives.

Seven lifebelts were dumped into the lake which froze over as a result of the cold weather.

This follows an incident two weeks ago when members of the public walked on the frozen lake to rescue a seagull trapped in feeding line.

Tony Griffiths, 22, owner of Lake Meadows Café, said: "They are putting lives at risk by doing this."

"I just don't understand why kids do it. It's not like they are stealing anything of value. It's just sheer vandalism."



**USELESS:** A lifebelt has been frozen into the water

"At the moment there are not enough lifebelts to go right round the lake."

Mr Griffiths called replacement belts have been put in place but beyond these there are no more spares as a number of belts are still in the lake.

Laura Anderson, spokeswoman for Essex Police, said: "If you see anyone doing such things, we urge you to call us so we can deal with these responsible."

Councillor Jeremy Gandy says he is working to secure new perimeter fencing around the park to protect against vandalism.

He said: "At the moment we are lacking two gates and having access in three other places. We need to secure these entrances."

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